



STATE OF IDAHO

OFFICE OF
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
BOISE

DR MARILYN HOWARD

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October 11, 2006

Dear President Stone and Members of the State Board of Education:

I want to express my concerns over the motion that is being presented to the State Board (IRSA, TAB4, Page 3) regarding a go-forward plan to close the ISDB and transition administration of services and programs to other entities. I realize you have also heard from others regarding their concerns.

Members of the committee from the State Department of Education, as well as others, felt that the committee was there only to hear forgone conclusions and that important voices in the process were minimized or omitted. Persons most knowledgeable and most concerned about certain aspects of the plan were subjugated to minor committees as a means of silencing them. Most important, no final motions, discussions, or votes were allowed. Therefore, no record exists of the concerns of those closest to what will become the problems in the aftermath.

The report before the board sets a date for closing the ISDB. It assumes that school districts will vie for the right to be the regional centers. The motion before the State Board of Education establishes a new bureaucracy that will difficult for the Board to disentangle if agencies prove incapable of adequate service delivery.

Certainly, the State Board of Education must examine the circumstances that exist today and must determine the best course for the future. At stake are the futures of many children whose lives are compromised by blindness, deafness, or both. That could best be done by commissioning a non-biased study under the direction of a disinterested contractor to thoroughly examine all aspects of program and service delivery.

I suggest that an intermediate step be taken that will not compromise the future of the children and the improvement of service delivery. I urge the Board to amend the

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motion to asking the legislature for funding to contract with an entity for a full and independent study of the needs of deaf and blind children in Idaho and to make recommendations as to how service can be delivered effectively and efficiently.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marilyn Howard". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Marilyn Howard
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

MH:lrh